

Significant oil spills involve numerous agencies and hundreds, possibly thousands, of people conducting and supporting cleanup efforts. To promote effective and quick coordination during oil spill responses, the Coast Guard and the EPA use a management system called the Incident Command System (ICS), a part of the National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS). ICS provides a comprehensive framework for managing emergency and non-emergency events. Originally created to coordinate fire-fighting efforts at forest fires, it has been expanded to an all-hazard, all-risk management system. Many agencies and companies involved in emergency response have adopted ICS, resulting in improved coordination of response efforts.

Management Activities:

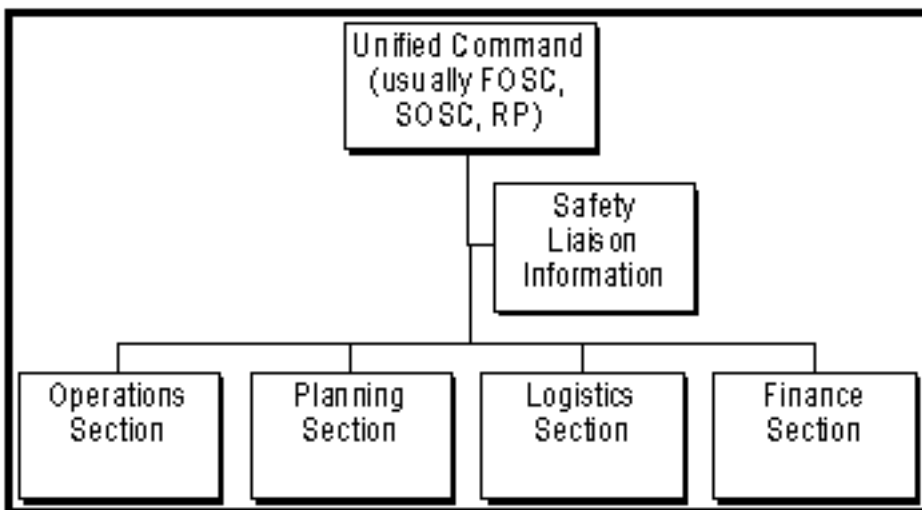
The ICS organization is built around five major management activities:

- *Incident Command* sets objectives and priorities and has overall responsibility at the incident. Safety, liaison, and information functions are assigned to command staff officers who report directly to the incident command.
- *Operations* conducts tactical operations to carry out an action plan, develops the tactical objectives and organization, and directs all resources.
- *Planning* develops the action plan to accomplish the objectives, collects and evaluates information, tracks resource status, and documents the response effort.
- *Logistics* provides support to meet incident needs, provides resources and all other services needed to support the incident response.
- *Finance/Administration* monitors costs related to the incident provides accounting, procurement, time recording, and cost analysis.

Flexibility:

The adaptability of ICS stems from the ability to expand or contract as necessary. One person, the Incident Commander, may manage small incidents. Large incidents require the functions of ICS to be set up as separate sections, which may be further subdivided. Span of control is maintained at three to seven employees per supervisor.

Unified Command:



In some incidents, including oil spills, there are several organizations that may have shared authority to respond. ICS has the advantage of combining efforts of the Responsible Party, multiple levels of government agencies, and assisting organizations into the same organizational system maximizing coordination and avoiding duplication of efforts. A structure called Unified Command allows the Incident Commander position to be shared among several agencies and organizations that have jurisdiction. In oil spills in the coastal zone, the Unified Command is typically comprised of the Federal On Scene Coordinator (FOSC), the State On Scene Coordinator(s) (SOSC), and a Responsible Party representative (RP). The spill situation may dictate other representation, such as Local or Tribal representatives, in the Unified Command. This group sets the overall incident objectives and guides and approves the incident action plan. The Unified Command members retain their authority, but work to resolve issues in a cooperative fashion so response efforts get maximum attention.

Planned Actions:

Every incident has an oral or written incident action plan prepared for each operational period, a period of time chosen based on the nature of the incident, typically a half day, a day, or several days.

Summary:

Originally developed to fight forest fires, ICS has grown into an incident management system that is widely adopted and used. Because of its flexible nature, low cost of implementation, and widespread use, it is an ideal system for emergency response.

Additional information is available from the sources and contacts listed on the opposite side of this sheet.

In the event of a spill

- Contact the National Response Center at 800-424-8802

Suggested References about the Incident Command System

- Incident Command System National Training Curriculum: I-100 ICS Orientation, National Wildfire Coordinating Group, 1994. Available at www.fema.gov/emi/is195.htm or www.uscg.mil/hq/cgi/ss/locc/part1.htm#ICSORI (USCG course)
- Incident Command System Forms, U.S. Coast Guard Response Website, www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/nmc/response/Default.htm#Guide

Contacts for spill response planning

In the Coastal Zone, contact your local Coast Guard Marine Safety Office

- MSO Portland: 207-780-3251
- MSO Boston: 617-223-3000
- MSO Providence: 401-435-2300
- MSO Long Island Sound: 203-468-4444
- Activities New York: 718-354-4134

- MSO Philadelphia: 215-271-4870
- MSO Buffalo: 761-843-9570

In the Inland Zone, contact the Environmental Protection Agency Regional Office

- Region I (New England): 617-918-1260
- Region II (New York and New Jersey): 732-548-8730